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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (SEPTEMBER 8 - SEPTEMBER 21, 2007)

¶1. (U) Summary: The following Northern Uganda Notes provides information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES  
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¶2. (SBU) President Yoweri Museveni and Congolese President Joseph Kabila signed an agreement in Arusha, Tanzania on September 8 that established a 90-day timetable after which Congo would take action against Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Garamba National Park. The Congolese armed forces were working with the U.N. Mission in the Congo (MONUC) on training integrated brigades and plans to attack the "negative forces" in eastern Congo.

¶3. (U) On September 13, the LRA's Juba spokesman Godfrey Ayoo declared that any attacks on LRA bases in eastern Congo would reignite the war in the north. Ayoo's comments were in response to the agreement that was signed in Arusha between President Museveni and Congolese President Joseph Kabila, and remarks made by Africa Bureau Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer on September 5. Ayoo asserted that the 90-day timetable in the Arusha agreement was hostile propaganda and violated the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and the spirit of the Juba peace talks. Ayoo threatened that "any attack on the LRA will be a declaration of war, and it will be a call on the Lord's Resistance Army to fight its way back to Uganda and should this peace process break, then the Lord's Resistance Army will fight until it overthrows the government of the Ugandan dictatorship that knows nothing else but war-mongery and war."

¶4. (U) A Voice of America report quoted a response from Ugandan Minister of Defense Crispus Kiyonga. "The Government of Uganda remains fully committed to the peace process and talks in Juba, and it is our expectation that soon we should reach agreement with the LRA so that they can have a soft landing and return home," said Kiyonga. "The LRA is not in a position to overthrow the Government of Uganda. We are talking so that our brothers and sisters come back home and have a soft landing."

¶5. (U) On September 8, Vincent Otti, LRA deputy took part in the Gulu-based Te-Yat radio program. Otti reiterated his concerns about the International Criminal Court (ICC). He also stated that he

would not sign any peace agreement that would incriminate him and put him in jail. Otti declared that there were over 3,000 "bombs" in northern Uganda. He asserted that effective eradication of these weapons could be done only by the LRA. UPDF's northern spokesman, Lt. Chris Magezi, stated that the UPDF had recovered almost 300 different types of weapons and ordnances within villages.

¶6. (U) USG Activities: AF Bureau Senior Advisor for Conflict Resolution Tim Shortley traveled in the region from September 5-17. He emphasized the importance of establishing a clear and reasonable timetable for the peace process, and looked at the administration of the mediation secretariat, and the launch of the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan for northern Uganda.

¶7. (U) Africa Bureau Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa James Swan served as the chief mediator of the U.S.-facilitated Tripartite Plus Commission, which met in Kampala from September 15-17. The process brings together Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda to discuss and coordinate dealing with negative forces operating against various member states, improvement and upgrading of diplomatic relations, and development of a common most wanted list and an extradition treaty.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY  
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¶8. (U) The official phasing out of internally-displaced persons (IDP) camps in Lango sub-region began on September 18. The GOU stated that the phase-out illustrated its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the LRA conflict and the reconstruction of the north.

¶9. (SBU) The U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization initiated a food drive to meet the needs of returning IDPs. The regions of

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Lango, Acholi, and Teso are currently participating in the cassava planting program that was launched in November 2006. Other crops being harvested include maize, rice, sweet potatoes, ground nuts, sorghum, sim sim and millet.

¶10. (U) Severe flooding has cut off roads in 25 districts in the northern districts of Teso, Lango Acholi, Karamoja, and West Nile regions. Bridges in Pader and Gulu districts have become impassable. On September 12, Prime Minister Apollo Nsibambi called an emergency meeting to address the disaster. The Government dispensed by boat emergency supplies and food such as maize and beans. Non-governmental organizations such as World Health Organization, UNICEF, Lutheran World Federation, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Population Services International have donated funds and pledged blankets, mosquito nets, plastic sheeting, and water treatment tables. A spike in disease and infections was expected.

¶11. (SBU) USG Activities: On September 14, the U.S. Ambassador to Uganda declared a disaster for the flooded districts in northern Uganda, resulting in the release of USD 100,000 to provide assistance to affected areas. A joint USAID-Uganda and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance assessment team had visited the flood affected Teso region from September 4 to 7. Early reports issued suggested that over 150,000 people were affected. The U.S. assessment team found the number to be 50,000. Assistance to be provided includes food, plastic sheeting, seeds, and cuttings for the forthcoming planting season. The cumulative effects of the rainfall have begun to compromise the structural integrity of many dirt homes, contaminate wells, inundate latrines, and wash away seeds and cassava cuttings. The USAID team also reported significant crop loss, minimal food reserves, and a lack of planting material for the upcoming agricultural season. An additional USD 400,000 has been released from Washington to aid flood victims.

¶12. (SBU) The USAID-funded Community Resilience and Dialogue Activity (CRD), implemented by International Rescue Committee (lead), Associazione Volontari per il Servizio (AVSI), CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Save the Children Uganda (SCiU), closed on August 31. The USG contribution of USD 15.5 million focused on the rehabilitation and development for individuals in conflict-affected areas in northern Uganda. CRD reintegrated over

4,700 formerly abducted children and ex-combatants, initiated economic development opportunities in affected areas, created peace clubs, and increased education for children affected by HIV/AIDS.

¶13. (U) On Friday September 21, representatives from the Office of Food for Peace, Office of Transition Initiatives, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Africa Bureau, and the Uganda Mission met to develop an integrated USAID strategy for the transition from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development for Northern Uganda. The integrated strategy is to function as a guide and tactical planning framework to assist in coordinating development progress across USAID offices to ensure success in the peace process, the return of internally displaced people, the reintegration of former combatants and the mitigation of future conflict.

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SECURITY UPDATE  
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¶14. (U) On September 21, the Ugandan Peoples' Defense Forces announced that it had court martialed 120 soldiers for capital offenses such as murder, rape, defilement, and armed robbery in northern Uganda since September 2006, according to spokesman Lt. Chris Magezi. The UPDF's disciplinary committee tried cases of minor offenses. The cases of 21 soldiers were still at trial at the Fourth Division Court Martial. Magezi said "the UPDF image is sacred and therefore the army will continue to guard it. It will not hesitate to punish any soldier who engages in criminal activities that breach the army's standard operating procedures."

¶15. (U) USG Activities: On September 21, USAID, DOJ/ICITAP, and Embassy personnel participated in a lessons-learned review of the pilot community justice activity in Lira District that ends on September 30. These lessons will feed into any future activities in security sector reform; justice, law and order; and community policing. The goals of the four-month pilot project were to provide training for police trainers and improve the coordination between police, prosecutors, and magistrates in support of re-establishment of a civilian-controlled judicial system in Lira District. Four police advisors and a prosecutor worked with the Ugandan Police Force and judges to design a one week community policing program

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aimed at training newly-recruited Special Police Constables. The specific skills taught included crime scene investigation, interrogation, report writing, and first aid. The Lira Police Station was given a face-lift intended to project a more professional image for the police and four motorbikes were donated to the police and one to the prosecutor's office. Twenty-two trainers and 72 Special Police Constables (SPCs) were trained in four different iterations of the course. The instructors will deploy on motorbikes and conduct training for SPCs at the sub-county level.

¶16. (U) As part of the DOJ/ICITAP program, the U.N. Office for the High Commission for Human Rights conducted human rights training for the constables and was involved in all stages of the program development. The police force also was given techniques for using daily roll call to disseminate information and training to officers.

A unique part of the pilot was the involvement of church leaders and faith-based organizations to assist the police with juvenile justice issues. Local churches were enlisted to assist in the protection of children who commit crimes. Due to a lack of remand facilities for children in the north, the juvenile is released to his family but his punishment, such as community service, is overseen by local church officials.

¶17. (U) The Joint Monitoring Commission was set to hold its last meeting on October 3. President Museveni reportedly will attend and formally launch the PRDP.

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IN THE MEDIA AND THE WEB  
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¶18. (U) The New Vision reported that fear among returned IDP's is increasing as a direct result of LRA threats to reignite the war if its bases in Congo are attacked. Lira's Resident District Commissioner held an emergency security meeting to assuage concerns among local residents. In response Ruhakana Rugunda, Chief Government negotiator stated that the GOU was committed to peace and is supporting the formation of a new force made up of police, local law enforcement officers, militia, and the military to guarantee peace and security in northern Uganda.

¶19. (U) On September 14, the International Crisis Group released a new briefing paper on northern Uganda. The ICG reports that "Recent developments create an opening to deal with core issues but have not altered the parties' questionable desire to do so." The ICG recognized that the LRA was getting more from the process - an opportunity to regroup and to improve its image - than it was giving.

¶20. (U) The ICG called for a comprehensive justice framework requiring prosecution of LRA and army commanders with the greatest responsibility for crimes, reconciliation of ordinary rebels, and truth-telling and compensation for victims. ICG acknowledged the possibility of safehaven for the LRA leaders indicted by the International Criminal Court, but "only as an absolute last resort and with international endorsement." The ICG called for donors and mediators to continue to close opportunities for those who seek to prolong the process indefinitely, including through monitoring of food and other aid to prevent the LRA from rebuilding its strength. The briefing called for an extension of the mandate of the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring team so it could operate in the DRC, should the LRA continue to refuse to assemble in Sudan, and for the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) to bolster forces on the DRC border to limit LRA mobility. It stated further that, "a clear message must be sent to Kampala that unilateral military action in Congo is unacceptable." The ICG also called for a "two - track strategy" of negotiating away the security threat while dealing with long-term redevelopment in northern Uganda as the best approach to ending the conflict.

¶21. (U) Resolve Uganda issued a statement on September 13, "welcoming the increased efforts of the United States government to contribute to a lasting resolution of the twenty-one year crisis..." Resolve noted the recent visit to the region by A/S Frazer and the appointment of Timothy Shortley as Senior Advisor on Conflict Resolution. Resolve urged the U.S. to "devote increased diplomacy and resources in support of the negotiations process." Specifically, Resolve called for the USG to publicly announce that its policy was to respect and uphold any agreement reached in Juba, to take every possible precaution against new military operations before "all reasonable peaceful options" have been exhausted, and "refrain from making public threats of military operations against

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the LRA while a viable negotiations process was taking place."

¶22. (SBU) In excerpts from her new book, "Turning War into Peace: An Insider's Story," printed in the East African newspaper, former member of parliament and government minister, Betty Bigombe, accused corrupt officers in the former National Resistance Army of fueling the LRA war. Bigombe's accusations arise from her experiences as chief mediator from 1993- 2004 for the GOU during the previously failed LRA peace talks. The East African article cited corrupt practices such as the misquoting of personnel numbers and equipment needs, illegal acquisition and sale of oil, vandalizing of army trucks, and the sale of rations and uniforms to the SPLA. UPDF Spokesman Felix Kulayigye refused to confirm or deny allegations until the UPDF received a copy of the book and investigated its accusations.  
BROWNING